

# **Minutes of the “Droitwich Spa Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group” Meeting held at 10.30am on 14 June 2023 (Meeting Number 4).**

Venue - St Richards House Council Chamber

Persons attending – Councillor GR Brookes – Steering Group Chairman (and Designated Elected Member with responsibility for NDP matters - including communication, liaison & the Steering Group).

- Dr David Nicholson – Appointed Consultant
- Councillor George Duffy – Leader of the Town Council and Chairman of DSTC Planning Committee
- Mrs Lyn Blewitt – representing Droitwich Spa Civic Society
- Mr Bill Moy
- Mr John Armstrong
- Mr Michael Howard
- Mr Paul Jones
- Gemma Ranford – Wychavon Place Board Officer for Droitwich Spa
- Katy Prew – Deputy Town Clerk (Community & Amenities)
- Mark Keld – Town Clerk

1. Apologies for absence were noted from Andy Ford – Wychavon Planning Department, Mr Mike Meredith (Civic Society) and Mr Alan Humphries.

2. Welcome and Introductions (*All*). The Town Clerk led, welcomed everyone to the Meeting and asked that persons present provide a brief general introduction with some background - including what they expected to bring by way of contribution, in the context of working with the Community, Steering Group and as part of the NDP project. By rotation around the board table everyone introduced themselves.

3. The Consultant led with a general overview of the NDP process and the project stages that had been completed from August 2022 to date. David explained the scope of influence for the NDP and the crucial alignment of policy content with the wider SWDP. Progress to date was qualified and summarised broadly including- establishing a Steering Group representative from the Community, Terms of Reference, Communication Strategy, Locality Grant Funding 2022/23 secured , Technical Work with AECOM on Housing Needs (HNA-completed) and Design Codes in course, Site assessment work by the consultant engaging with WDC, the Launch Event (13.3.23) and initial questionnaire output analysis.

In general discussion David explained that land supply for the District Area was an issue to the extent that the original set validity date of 2031 for the SWDP is being reviewed. It is considered that the land supply for new development is currently less than 5 years. The SWDP Review is taking this forward for consideration up to 2041 with various area wide proposed development sites for allocation. The wider Regulation 19 consultation was carried out with this regard in November & December 2022. Most of the other existing SWDP policies remain valid and in play except for land supply. The alignment period of the Droitwich Spa NDP is also being set as 2041 alongside the SWDP Revision. It is anticipated that the revised SWDP will be submitted through the Secretary of State shortly and this will in turn be the guide for the Droitwich Spa NDP. In addition there is a higher level review of National Planning Policy currently taking place which may also influence the emerging Droitwich Spa NDP.

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Regarding “Strategic Policies “by definition these are for general conformity. The SWDP identifies which elements of the plan are strategic and which are not – these are defined on the SWDP web site including those attributed with the ongoing Revision exercise.

4. To note and accept the Minutes of the last Steering Group Meeting (3) – 26.01.2023 (attached to Agenda papers). Noted.
5. To note the Steering Group Terms of Reference accepted by the Town Council in December 2022 (attached with Agenda). Accepted for publishing on the DSTC web page. Added 15.06.2023.
6. To note the Communication and Consultation Strategy draft produced in November 2022 (attached). To be considered for acceptance for attachment to DSTC Web Site. Section 4.3 requires full completion for the list of Local Stakeholder Groups & Organisations before publication online.

In general discussion it was explained and agreed that the list should be as comprehensive as possible to support strong Community engagement as part of the evidence trail for the NDP. It was agreed that suggestions of Local Groups and Organisations to be included as part of the Communications Strategy should be sent to the Clerk. This will enable collating, before final updating as part of the agenda for the July Steering Group meeting – prior to publication of the Full Strategy on the web page.

Suggested Local Stakeholder Groups & Organisations mentioned included - Civic Society, History & Archaeology, CVS, SOBBS, FODSL, the Place Board, Parochial Church Council, RBL, WDC & WCC. Neighbouring Parish Councils, Schools, Youth Council, Police SNT, Fire and Rescue, Youth Groups and Cadets (Fire, Air and Army), Sports Clubs (e.g St Peters Pavilion, King Georges Pavilion, Lido and Leisure Centre connections), Friends of Railway Station, Traders Groups.

The Chairman and Bill asked about the Place Board role in general. The Clerk confirmed that the Place Board had agreed in January 2023 to support distribution, engagement and profile for the Business & Commerce questionnaire being prepared for September. Two further actions were requested by the Chairman and Bill for Gemma to kindly take back through Wychavon District Council for consideration. Gemma agreed to take the following requested points forward,

- To publish Agendas & Minutes of Place Board meetings in the public domain as part of an overall Communications Strategy.
  - To enable SOBBS the opportunity to share with the Place Board the work completed and being carried out in the Community towards resurrection of the Brine Baths for the Town.
7. A general review of the Initial Short Consultation responses received from the Public Launch Event on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The full raw data received and taken from the Digital replies is attached with Agenda and there will be other written and “post it note” responses available to see at the meeting. These responses will be categorised, and tabulated further into a summary report in due course. This will then form part of the evidence of public consultation being undertaken. Noted. The work is currently in course following the prescribed evidence format guided by David.
  8. General discussion on the proposed Community Questionnaire content being prepared for later in the summer 2023. In addition to consider the Business & Commerce Questionnaire to be taken forward with the support of the Wychavon District Council – Droitwich Spa Place Board forum. David explained that he would start to prepare the draft residents and Business/Commerce questionnaires ready for review at the next meeting. Reference was made to example question provided by AECOM for the Design Codes work stream, although these were considered not to be applicable at this stage in the NDP progress. David has provided AECOMM with Evidence Base material which covers most of the salient points for Design Codes up to now.

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## 9. Project Costs Update

- (a) To confirm the position regarding Locality Grant Funding to Year End 31.03.2023 and thereafter for the new period from 01.04.2023. To note that as at 7<sup>TH</sup> June 2023, Central Government DHLUC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities) have not yet confirmed grant availability for 2023/24 and there is no indication of when this might be released.
- (b) To forecast the costs for the Community Questionnaire and the Business & Commerce Questionnaire components for later Summer 2023.

The Clerk updated as follows,

1. **Grant Funding** - Finalisation of the Locality Funding position for the Grant Period up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. An End of Grant Period Report for 2022/2023 has been submitted to Locality for the Year End on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023. This was presented at Council in April 2023 and confirmed expenditure of the eligible grant funding total of £3150 for professional fees during the period. To accord with the process the balance of any unspent funds from the original £9k Grant awarded in mid- September 2022 has to be returned to Locality. Going Forwards the total grant available will be 18K - £3150 spent to date = **£14,850**

The original 18K eligibility comprises the basic grant of £10K and £8K for the expected housing site allocation/s.

It is expected that Locality will confirm the funding application process and timeframe details for the 2023/2024 period allocations soon. This is anticipated during April each year but as at mid -June 2023 no further update has been announced by the Central Government DHLUC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities). When announced a funding application can be submitted for the 2023/2024 which would maintain the anticipated cost neutral position for the professional consultant fees. Alternatively Council will need to consider the fees to be paid from the budgeted working Business contingency for operations and/or Reserves.

## 2. **Project Cost Provision**

The current position regarding Locality Grant Funding for professional fees is fully outlined in Section 1. Other costs including website enabling, capacity and the survey monkey function for questionnaires has already been absorbed within the general business upgrade for the online capability last December – within the allocated 22/23 IT Budgeted Provision for the Town Council. Staff and Resources continues to be absorbed within the normal workload arrangements for Town Council business and strategic projects. An informed & estimated costing has been carried out for the main consultation questionnaires scheduled later in the summer. This is anticipated to be covered from supplementary funding sources and the business contingency (if required). Estimated costs are –

- Information flyer printing (A5 double sized) to publicise questionnaires and link details = £1500 (quantity 30K).
- A smaller quantity of Printed format questionnaires (1000) = £250
- Distribution costs for all households and businesses of flyer =£2000.

## 10. Outline of next steps for the project, timelines and agree next Steering Group Meeting date/s (All).

Next Steering Group Meeting date agreed to be Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 10.30am in the same venue – St Richards House Council Chamber. Provisional Agenda items to include,

1. **Communications Strategy** – To populate the Full List of Consultee Groups and Local Organisations – (Section 4.3). This will then enable final publication on the Town Council website and form the basis of

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additional evidence gathering to align with the Residents and Business & Commerce Questionnaires (expected September onwards).

2. To receive a full overview report and collated analysis of the Initial Questionnaire from Launch in March 2023. To be provided from Consultant
3. Initial Drafted Residents and Business & Commerce Questionnaires. To be provided from Consultant. Both questionnaires are scheduled for public release in September.
4. Further Engagement and input with the Place Board to support the Business & Commerce questionnaire process.

Meeting Closed 11.50am

Mark Keld

16.06.2023